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9. *Ideal portrait of Sosei Hoshi (ninth century)*

Album of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets"

Ascribed to Tosa Mitsusuké (c. 1475)

Purchased from the Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, 1917

## "The Thirty-six Immortal Poets"

AN ALBUM OF JAPANESE PAINTINGS

IN the art of the Far East certain pictorial subjects, apart from religious themes, frequently recur. Each bears a well-appointed title, usually somewhat fanciful and often poetic, which has come to be regarded as classic. The reason is not far to seek, for the artists of the Orient come of races which not only view the old with reverence, but always revert to the past for inspiration. In Japan, from the foundation of the Empire until the reformation of half a century ago, this tendency was especially marked, the entire social fabric having been built upon a system of inheritance with which ancestor-worship, the indigenous national faith, was closely allied. Even a profession like painting, in which individual talent should be the first consideration, was not free from the bonds of this system. Thus, for example, members of the Tosa family for generations filled the office of Keeper of the Imperial Painters' Bureau, and for centuries the Kano clan supplied the court of the Shogun with artists. The successor to such an hereditary post naturally conformed to the traditions of the house of painters whose standard-bearer he became, the monotony of mere transmission of formalized art being broken only occasionally by a generation with creative ability. Moreover, feudalism, which dominated the country for several centuries, penetrated even the realm of art, implanting therein a strong clan spirit. In all branches of art there were families possessing heirloom-manuals containing secret instructions in traditional methods, which were regarded as sacred heritages; while in extreme cases professional information passed from father to son by word of mouth. The relations of master and disciple were likewise bound by convention, as evidenced by the vow which the latter had to take to the effect that he would not transgress prescribed forms in painting nor impart his knowledge unscrupulously or without authorization.\* A pupil's training consisted in copying and recopying the so-called *fumpon*, or "model-books," prepared by the instructor himself or inherited from his ancestors, and containing sketches of masterpieces approved by his forefathers and therefore akin to the type favored by the school. So much stress upon tradition, at once a safeguard against radicalism and an obstacle to free development, naturally gave birth to pronounced school mannerisms and restrictions extending even to choice of subject, with the inevitable result of endless repetition. It may be added that the themes selected by artists of the Chinese and Yamato schools were generally such as could not

be studied directly from nature or observed at first hand: consequently, dependence upon the *fumpon* for general guidance was necessary.

Included in the class of subjects popular with artists of old is the representation of the "Sanjurōk-Kasen," or the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets,"\* to which an album now in the possession of the Museum† is devoted.

The album contains thirty-six panels, joined and folded between two covers. In each one of these panels is seen a seated figure of a poet, drawn in black on a one-time white, but now gray-toned, paper,‡ and colored with reserve. Though somewhat defaced, in quality of execution all the panels display the touch of a master-hand. Their simplicity of composition—accomplished in a few strokes, some crisp, some flexible, in accordance with the requirements of the parts—is in itself noteworthy; but it is essentially the facial and postural expressiveness of the figures that evokes our special interest. With one exception all the figures—be they noblemen, court ladies, or priests—are seated alone, without accessories, and the effect produced is naturally one of similarity; yet, by varying their attitudes, actual repetition has been avoided. Above the image of each poet is inscribed, with an excellent brush-stroke, one of his or her representative poems the picturesqueness of the calligraphy adding a certain decorative interest to the portraits. The inner sides of the covers are decorated with delicate landscape paintings in colors and gold.

Pictorially this work, which is unsigned, and the authorship of which is at present not definitely established, belongs to the Tosa School. An accompanying *kiwamē-gaki*, or certificate, signed by Sumiyoshi Hiromori§ and dated 1737, states in substance that the paintings are by Tosa Mitsusuké (second half of the fifteenth century), with the exception of the three figures of Hitomaro (No. 1), Yoshinobu (No. 33), and Kanemori (No. 35), which are from the brush of Sumiyoshi Hiromichi (1598-1670).|| According to this document, then, the panels, exclusive of those by Hiromichi,—obviously replacing three which had been lost or damaged,—are the work of Mitsusuké. A question arises as to the correctness of this attribution, for there is unfortunately no other authentic record to substantiate the claim. Furthermore, no specimen of this artist's work is at present

\*Since the "sen" in "kasen" may be translated "immortal" and "genius,"—the latter in the sense of a superhuman being as well as a person of phenomenal intellect,—"poet-genius" might be a more exact rendering.

†M. F. A. 17.1637-1674. Purchased from the Francis Gardner Curtis Fund.

‡About 13" x 18".

§Born in 1705; died in 1777; a painter of the Tosa family and the decorator of the verso of the two covers of the album.

||Another certificate signed by Kohitsu Ryoen declares the inscriptions to be by Ichijo Fuyuyoshi (a nobleman and statesman, born 1464, died 1514), except those written above the four figures of Hitomaro (No. 1), Nyokurodo Sakon (No. 31), Yoshinobu (No. 33), and Kanemori (No. 35), which it says are the work of Sonsho Shinno (a prince and monk, born 1631, died 1674). Ryoen (1704-1774) was the seventh of the second line of the Kohitsu house, which has been engaged from the sixteenth century to the present day in determining the genuineness and authorship of old calligraphy.

\*The professional name of a worthy apprentice was bestowed upon him by his master, and, as in the case of father and son, was generally a combination of ideographs, including a part of the master's own. For example, the "tan" in Tazan and the "yu" in Yugen are identical respectively with the two ideographs which make up the name of their master, Tannyu. In special cases a pupil was allowed the use of his master's family name for professional purposes, even though no blood relationship existed.



7. *Ariwara no Narihira* (825-880)

known with which to make a comparison. We are therefore obliged, for the time being at least, to let the work rest as "ascribed to Mitsusuké," though it is probable that it comes from his hand. Of one fact, however, we are certain: the paintings unquestionably belong to Mitsusuké's time. It may be noted in passing that Hiromori, the writer of the certificate, was the great-grandson of Hiromichi, to whom the three replacements are credited, and who claimed Tosa lineage from the fact that his great-grandfather, Mitsunobu, was brother of Mitsusuké by adoption. Very little is known concerning the life of Mitsusuké other than that he worked during the second half of the fifteenth century. According to various Japanese books on painters he was the son of Hirochika (middle of the fifteenth century), a Keeper of the Imperial Painters' Bureau. The author of the "Zoku Honcho Gwashi" (1819) briefly refers to Mitsusuké as a painter of merit, existing specimens of whose

work are extremely rare. A few subjects involving human figures and compositions of flowers and birds are, however, known to have been treated by Mitsusuké, and among them the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets." That only such meagre records concerning this artist are available is not surprising, for he lived in an age when the Tosa was at its lowest ebb, almost completely overshadowed by the then-prevailing Chinese ideals of æstheticism, which reached their height under the patronage of the Ashikaga Shoguns.

It was during the Fujiwara period (900-1189) that the seed of the Japanese art-instinct, nurtured from the sixth to the eighth century by the continental culture of China and India, blossomed in a style of painting known as *Yamato-é* (literally, "Japanese pictures"), as opposed to the products of the Chinese school, which had hitherto claimed first and sole place in the pictorial art of Japan. During the subsequent Kamakura period

(1190-1337), this distinctly national school of painting attained its acme, its chief exponents being the Tosa artists. For their themes these artists drew generally from all phases of the life of the Japanese people, irrespective of class, and from native historical or legendary episodes of romance and of war. At the same time they devoted their talents to the so-called *nisé-é* (literally, "likeness-pictures"), a term primarily implying portraiture, but not necessarily restricted to portrayal from the life. Rather was it a representation of a person or even an animal, which aimed to bring out, chiefly in lines, the essential quality, the very individuality of the subject, whether actually seen or merely imagined. So all the portraits of noted poets executed in the Tosa manner may be placed in the category of *nisé-é*. The most notable portrayal of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets" is that contained in the celebrated set of two *makimono* which comes from this Kamakura period and is attributed to Nobuzané (first half of the thirteenth century).<sup>\*</sup> With the advent of the Ashikaga period (1338-1582), the glory of the Tosa school, which had dominated the art of Japan for a century and a half, began to fade through too close adherence to inflexible tradition and was soon eclipsed by the increasing influence of the Chinese mode of expression in art. Indeed, the great name of the Tosa was with difficulty upheld by Mitsunobu (1414-1525), adopted brother of Mitsusuké, who absorbed the Chinese manner of painting and grafted it upon the traditional style of his family. This return to anything like popularity on the part of the Tosa school was but temporary, for the fast-approaching political disturbances at length reached the capital, resulting in the Epoch of the Wars; and in 1569, with the death in battle of Mitsumoto, grandson of Mitsunobu, the main line of the Tosas became extinct. Tosa traditions, however, were feebly preserved in the hands of kinsmen through this epoch and the following brief but eventful Momoyama period (1583-1602). When order was at last restored, in the early part of the seventeenth century, under the Tokugawa régime (1603-1867), the Tosa family of painters was revived by Mitsuyoshi, and a branch named Sumiyoshi was reestablished by Hiromichi, both carrying on the traditional art in a much degenerated form. These two branches survived until modern times — the Tosa, from the time of Mitsuoki, grandson of Mitsuyoshi, again filling the keepership of the Imperial Painters' Bureau, and the Sumiyoshi serving the court of the Tokugawa Shoguns. It is obvious from the foregoing that the Ashikaga period, in which Mitsusuké worked, was most unpropitious to his art, and we have therefore all the more reason to admire the ability

of an artist who could produce, under such adverse conditions, works of the excellence of those contained in our album. Whether or not they are by Mitsusuké, their quality forces one to conclude that had the artist who painted them lived in an age less antagonistic to his school he would certainly have left to posterity a greater number of masterpieces.

From a remote past the Japanese have delighted in distinguishing a man of unequalled achievements by conferring upon him posthumously a title significant of his apparently superhuman attainments; for example, Hitomaro, the greatest of all Japanese poets, has come to be venerated as a *kasei*, or prince of poetry, while others of lesser, yet extraordinary, attainment in the same field have been honored as *kasen*, or immortals of poetry. Such procedure has always found expression also in pictorial representations. It is likewise characteristic of Orientals to group persons, places, or things under titles prefixed by numerals, as, for instance, the "Five Hundred Arhats," the "Eight Views of Hsiao Hsiang," the "Seven Treasures," etc. The "Thirty-six Immortal Poets" is but one of many such numerical categories, and its conception is accredited to Fujiwara no Kinto (996-1075), a nobleman, scholar, and poet of renown. It is said that a discussion which took place between Kinto and Prince Guhei upon the comparative merits of the two celebrated poets, Hitomaro and Tsurayuki, prompted Kinto to compile an anthology entitled *Sanju-roku Nin Sen*, a "Collection of the Works of the Thirty-six Celebrities." The volume comprised a few poems by each one of that group of men and women which the Japanese have since recognized as the *Sanju-rok-Kasen*, or "Thirty-six Immortal Poets." No conclusive information is forthcoming as to Kinto's motive in choosing the numeral thirty-six, but it has been suggested that he selected it as a multiple of six, the number of another group of poets known as *Rok-Kasen*, or the "Six Immortal Poets." One each of the works of these six poets is quoted as representative of various styles of poetry in the introduction to the *Kokin Waka Shu*, a "Collection of Odes, Ancient and Modern," compiled in 905 by Tsurayuki, whom Kinto greatly admired. The "Thirty-six Immortal Poets," as chosen by Kinto, include the most distinguished poets and poetesses — all of the nobility or in the service of the court — of the period extending from the seventh to the eleventh century.

During the Nara period (roughly, 700-800), in spite of the controlling influence of Chinese thought upon politics and literature, verse-making in the native style, which had its origin in a remote antiquity, attained such vogue as to be counted among the essential accomplishments of court officials.

With the exception of the first third, the subsequent Heian period (801-1189) is more often designated by the name of the then-reigning family

<sup>\*</sup> A few years ago these *makimono*, or rolls, formerly in the collection of Count Satake, became the property of a war-time millionaire in Tokyo. The fortunes of the latter, however, suffered reverses, and accordingly a short time ago the *makimono* were disposed of in parts, the two rolls being cut up into thirty-seven sections. The Museum possesses copies in outline of the original rolls.

of regents, the Fujiwara, a name virtually synonymous with romance and luxury. The cessation of intercourse with China, which ensued upon the final rupture of diplomatic relations in 838, gave impetus to a national movement in art and culture. Moreover, Japan's isolation at this time and her peaceful internal conditions left the dignitaries free to indulge in the pursuit of worldly pleasures and seriously to devote themselves to literature—a combination of circumstances which culminated in the classical age of Japanese literature. The taste for poetry became almost a mania, and among the pastimes of the court circle poem contests naturally occupied an important place. Upon a given theme two contestants wrote verselets whose technique and sentiment were rigidly criticised by a judge before announcement of the award. The seriousness attached to the contest is well illustrated in the famous incident of the Tentoku poem tournament. In this party, held before the Emperor in 958, a certain nobleman and poet, Mibu no Tadami, matched his ability with one Taira no Kanemori on a theme entitled "Maiden Love." The former wrote as follows:

"How quickly the rumor that I am in love has gone abroad, though I have begun to feel it in secret only!"

and the latter:

"Though I keep my love secret, it betrays itself upon my face, for men ask me why I am preoccupied."

Ono no Saneyori, the judge, being unable to render a decision, appealed to the Emperor, who hummed the verse by Kanemori. The story goes that Tadami, as the result of this defeat, died of a broken heart.

It was but part of a natural sequence that the people, carried away by their enthusiasm for poetry, should turn to the eminent poets of bygone days for inspiration. One result was the practice of worshipping before a portrait of the greatest poet, Hitomaro; and the so-called Hitomaro *Eiku*, or offering to the Hitomaro portrait, became a ceremony which preceded the poem tournaments. The origin of this interesting rite is told as follows:

A nobleman and poet named Fujiwara no Kanefusa, who lived in the early twelfth century, four hundred years after the time of Hitomaro, having beheld Hitomaro in a dream as a man of about sixty years of age, sitting and holding a writing brush in his right hand and a paper in his left, caused a painter next day to execute a portrait of the venerable poet based on a description of the vision. The result being satisfactory, Kanefusa hung the picture in his house and daily prayed before it. So inspired was the nobleman by the pictorial presence of the master-poet that he succeeded in becoming himself a poet of great merit. For generations after the death of Kanefusa the worship of Hitomaro was practised by many devotees, copies of the original drawing of Hitomaro and

copies of the copies being executed for the purpose. At the Hitomaro *Eiku* a group of men interested in the discussion and composition of poems gathered in a room and saluted Hitomaro, whose portrait was hung in the place of honor, and served with offerings of food.

The foregoing account throws light on the truthfulness of the portraits, not only of Hitomaro, who heads the list of the Thirty-six Immortal Poets, but of all belonging to the group contained in our album. There is very little doubt that authentic portraits of the individuals who are supposed to be represented in this set of paintings never existed. They must have been from the beginning ideal, or more correctly, imaginary portraits.

We cannot now ascertain by whom or when the first attempt was made to represent all these thirty-six poets in pictures; but it is certain that this particular group was not established until the eleventh century and that the first Hitomaro *Eiku* was not performed earlier than 1118; furthermore, it appears that the fashion of poem-writing, which had reached its acme of popularity during the Fujiwara epoch, was still in vogue in the beginning of the military period of the Kamakura reign. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that at some time during the twelfth century an artist painted or drew the earliest set of the thirty-six poets, a timely choice because of the popularity of the theme, which since then has become a classical subject, having been dealt with by painters of the Yamato-é, whose works antedate our album, as well as by artists of all schools of more recent date. We may add that the enthusiasm for poetry induced both amateurs and professionals to draw in imitation of works by artists of repute on this subject. It is interesting to note that Tachibana Morikuni, a noted painter, writing in the *Ehon Jikishiho*, published in 1745, says: "The formula for painting the Immortal Poets is a secret of the Tosa family; especially is that of the six figures, Hitomaro, Narihira, Isé, Komachi, Mibu and Sarumaru, imparted only by word of mouth . . . So one (an outsider) can learn only from the ancient masterpieces themselves."

The stiff and voluminous ceremonial costumes in which the figures in our album are clothed betray the high station of the wearers. Four are officers of the Imperial Guard (Nos. 7, 16, 18, and 21) and two ecclesiastical dignitaries (Nos. 8 and 9); five are court-ladies (Nos. 4, 12, 19, 31, and 36), the rest being noblemen and court attendants of various ranks. The dates of some of these poets antedate the styles of their costumes, which are of the Fujiwara epoch, when the first attempt was made to depict poet-celebrities. That the costumes should not reflect the fashions of the artist's own day is to be expected, for, as we have seen, the painter was dealing with a traditional subject which had to be treated after the manner of generations of predecessors.



1. Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (c. 660-c. 710)



2. Ki no Tsurayuki (died 946)



3. Oshikochi no Mitsuné (died 907)



4. Isé (died 939)

From the Album of the “Thirty-six Immortal Poets”



5. Otomo no Yakamochi (died 785)



6. Yamabé no Akahito (seventh to eighth century)



8. Sojo Henjo (816-890)



10. Ki no Tomonori (835-905)

From the Album of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets"





11. Sarumaru Tayu (ninth century)



12. Ono no Komachi (ninth century)



13. Fujiwara no Kanesuké (877-933)



14. Fujiwara no Asatada (910-966)

From the Album of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets"



15. Fujiwara no Atsutada (906-943)



16. Fujiwara no Takamitsu (died 994)



17. Minamoto no Kintada (tenth century)



18. Mibu no Tadiné (died 965)

From the Album of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets"





23. *Minamoto no Muneyuki* (died 940)



24. *Minamoto no Nobuakira (tenth century)*



25. *Fujiwara no Kiyomasa (tenth century)*



26. *Minamoto no Shitago* (911-983)

*From the Album of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets"*



27. Fujiwara no Okikaze (ninth to tenth century)



28. Kiyowara no Motosuke (908-990)



29. Sakanoé no Korenori (tenth century)



30. Fujiwara no Motozané (tenth century)

From the Album of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets"



31. *Nyōkurodo Sakon* (tenth to eleventh century)



32. *Fujiwara no Nakabumi* (tenth century)



33. *Onakatomi no Yoshinobu* (921–991)



34. *Mibu no Tadami* (tenth century)

*From the Album of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets"*



35. *Taira no Kanemori* (died 990)36. *Nakatsukasa* (tenth century)*From the Album of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets"*

## THE POETS AND THEIR POEMS

The following are the names of the poets in the order in which they appear in our album, together with prose renderings of the poems inscribed on the respective portraits: \*

## 1. Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (c. 660–c. 710).

My thoughts are with the boat now dimly vanishing behind the isle through the morning mist over Akashi Bay.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Ki no Tsurayuki (died 946).

The breeze is not chilly beneath the cherry tree whose blossoms are flying; yet behold, from the sky falls a strange snow!<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Oshikochi no Mitsuné (died 907).

Though the glory of Spring is felt everywhere, still there is snow on Mi-Yoshino's peak.

## 4. Isé (died 939).

On Miwa Mountain,—ah! how shall I wait as the years pass by, when I know no one will come to visit me?<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Otomo no Yakamochi (died 785).

The pheasant, wandering in the spring field, betrays its whereabouts to men as it calls for love.

## 6. Yamabé no Akahito (seventh to eighth century).

On the Waka shore, when the tide flows in and the dry bed is no more, the storks fly toward the reedy marsh, sounding their cries.

## 7. Ariwara no Narihira (825-880).

Peaceful indeed would be the feeling of Spring were there in this world no cherry flowers at all!<sup>2</sup>

## 8. Sojo Henjo (816-890).

Alas! little did my mother dream, as she brushed my black hair, that I should become thus (a monk with shaven head)!<sup>3</sup>

\* These poems are in the *tanka* style, i.e., each is complete, in thirty-one Japanese syllables arranged in five lines of 5, 7, 5, 7, and 7. The extreme difficulty of translating a Japanese verse into English cannot be imagined by one who has never attempted it. Almost invariably a deep meaning is cunningly concealed within the few words that make up the poem; besides, a phrase is frequently intended to convey a double meaning. In the present renderings more attention has been paid to adhering to the original expression and brevity than to making them poetical or interpretative. It is unnecessary to add that the peculiar charm of the original is sacrificed in the process of translation.

<sup>1</sup> The design on the verso of the front cover, by Hiromori, illustrates this poem, showing a seascape with islands and sailboats.

<sup>2</sup> The falling petals of the cherry blossom are likened to snowflakes.

<sup>1</sup> Sent to Nakahira, whose love has cooled, informing him of the poetess' departure to join her father in Yamato, where stands Mt. Miwa.

<sup>2</sup> This emphasizes the captivating charm of the blossoming cherry, queen of all flowers in Japan.

<sup>3</sup> A nobleman named Munetsada, filled with sorrow over the death of the Emperor Nimmyo, from whom he had received special favor, became a monk, adopting the name Henjo. The poem was composed when, in accordance with monastic rules, his head was shaved for the first time.



*Verso of the front cover, by Sumiyoshi Hiromori,  
illustrating Poem No. 1*

9. Sosei Hoshi (ninth century).  
As I look around me, willows and cherry blossoms are blended, and lo, the capital has become a brocade of Spring!
10. Ki no Tomonori (835-905).  
Through the autumn breeze I hear the coming of the first wild geese. Whose message, I wonder, are they bringing? <sup>1</sup>
11. Sarumaru Tayu (ninth century).  
Sad indeed is the autumn season, when, from the depths of mountain forests, comes the call of the stag treading the path strewn with colored leaves. <sup>2</sup>
12. Ono no Komachi (ninth century).  
In the world 't is the heart, the flower of man, that fades unobserved. <sup>3</sup>
13. Fujiwara no Kanesuké (877-933).  
The heart of a parent goes astray, though not in darkness, for the love of his child. <sup>4</sup>
14. Fujiwara no Asatada (910-966).  
Had I never met her, I should never have complained, either of her or of myself.
15. Fujiwara no Atsutada (906-943).  
Ah, my thoughts in the past were nothing compared with my feelings after meeting my love!
16. Fujiwara no Takamitsu (died 994).  
Oh, how I envy the moon which shines ever serenely on this world, so difficult to dwell in! <sup>1</sup>
17. Minamoto no Kintada (tenth century).  
Longing to hear once more the cry of the cuckoo, I lingered in the mountain road till night fell. <sup>2</sup>
18. Mibu no Tadamine (died 965).  
Since we parted — my lover cold and unfeeling like the morning moon then shining — nothing gives me more pain than the daybreak.
19. Saigyô no Nyôgo (936-985).  
In the sound of my harp the music of the mountain pines seems to vibrate. From which peak (or string) does it issue? <sup>3</sup>
20. Onakatomi no Yorimoto (tenth century).  
May your life endure, even though your (bamboo) cane, whose every joint enfolds a thousand years, wears away! <sup>4</sup>
21. Fujiwara no Toshiyuki (died in 901 or 907).  
Though not clearly visible to the eye, Autumn has come, for I am alarmed by the sound of the wind. <sup>5</sup>
22. Minamoto no Shigeyuki (died 1000).  
Alas! of late, like a wave hurled by the wind against the rock, incessantly I feel shattered! <sup>6</sup>
23. Minamoto no Muneyuki (died 940).  
Spring has arrived: even the hue of the pine, always so green, becomes intensified.

<sup>1</sup> Wild geese are often spoken of as messengers, the reference being to the Chinese warrior, Su Wu, who succeeded in sending a letter from the enemy's country to his sovereign by tying it to the leg of a wild goose.

<sup>2</sup> Composed "upon hearing the call of a stag."

<sup>3</sup> The poetess wrote this "upon finding the heart of a man changed."

<sup>4</sup> This was suggested by the poet's experience at a feast, when, though much intoxicated, a few who remained late dwelt at length upon the subject of their children.

<sup>1</sup> The poem is prefaced thus: "Upon beholding the moon about the time that I began to think of becoming a monk," i.e., retiring from the world.

<sup>2</sup> Inscribed upon a screen with a picture showing a man on a mountain road listening to a cuckoo. The plaintive cry of the cuckoo strongly appeals to the Japanese poet.

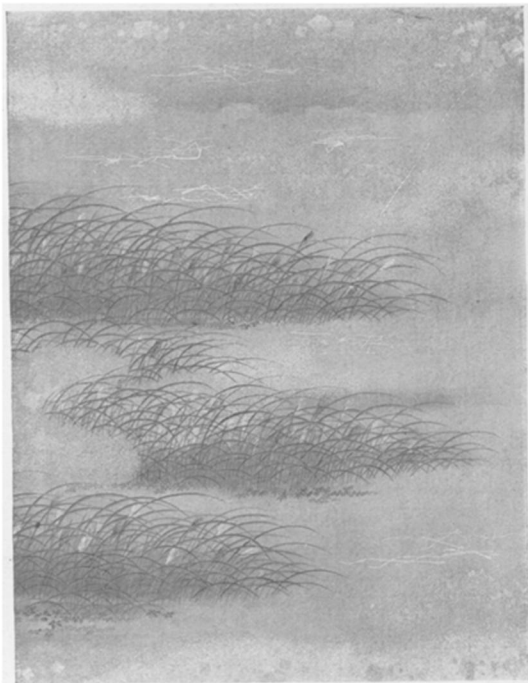
<sup>3</sup> A play on words: the Japanese "o" used in the poem has the double meaning of "peak" and "string." This was composed by the poetess upon the theme "the wind in the pines brushing the *koto* (Japanese harp) at night."

<sup>4</sup> On the occasion of the fiftieth birthday of the Emperor Daigo's consort, Odaiko, this was composed to accompany a cane which the poet had made.

<sup>5</sup> Written on the first day of Autumn.

<sup>6</sup> The torment of love!





*Verso of the back cover, by Sumiyoshi Hiromori,  
reflecting Poem No. 36*

24. Minamoto no Nobuakira (tenth century).  
To one whom feeling moves I would  
show this evening with its moon and cherry  
blossoms — so utterly wasted! <sup>1</sup>
25. Fujiwara no Kiyomasa (tenth century).  
Why do not the storks that dwell  
on the Fukei shore, where the heav-  
enly wind blows, return into the sky, I  
wonder? <sup>2</sup>
26. Minamoto no Shitago (911-983).  
As I count the times the moon, now  
reflected on the face of the water, has  
shone, lo, 't is the middle of Autumn! <sup>3</sup>
27. Fujiwara no Okikazé (ninth to tenth century).  
Sad must be the heart of Tanabata,  
who promised to meet her lover but  
once in a year; it is hardly a meeting  
at all. <sup>4</sup>
28. Kiyowara no Motosuké (908-990).  
Like the Otonashi (soundless) stream  
flow my tears as I think of her, but dare not  
disclose my thought. <sup>1</sup>
29. Sakanoé no Korenori (tenth century).  
Heavy must be the snow on Mi-Yoshino  
Mountain, for it has grown colder here in  
the old city! <sup>2</sup>
30. Fujiwara no Motozané (tenth century).  
So long have grown the summer weeds  
on the road that they almost oblige travellers  
to tie the blades. <sup>3</sup>
31. Nyokurodo Sakon (tenth to eleventh century).  
Troubled we shall be, like the God of  
Katsuragi, if the day breaks, for our night-  
meeting, that joins us like the rock bridge,  
shall be no more. <sup>4</sup>
32. Fujiwara no Nakabumi (tenth century).  
How has the night (my age) advanced  
while I waited for the morning moon to  
shine! <sup>5</sup>
33. Onakatomi no Yoshinobu (921-991).  
Even though thy age, O Pine, is limited  
to a thousand years, from to-day, when the  
Prince plucked thee, thou shalt live as many  
thousand years (as he). <sup>6</sup>
34. Mibu no Tadami (tenth century).  
How quickly the rumor that I am in love  
has gone abroad, though I have begun to  
feel it in secret only! <sup>7</sup>
35. Taira no Kanemori (died 990).  
As Autumn passes away, the token it  
leaves behind is the frost around my hair-  
cord.
36. Nakatsukasa (tenth century).  
Even though the autumn wind is blowing,  
he comes not; were he a reed there would  
be a sound at least. <sup>8</sup>

K. T.

<sup>1</sup> Wasted because the common people can see the beauty of the cherry blossoms in the sunlight only. This poem was written "upon seeing the flowers on a fine moonlight night."

<sup>2</sup> Written while Kiyomasa was Governor of Kii Province, far away from the Imperial City. "The sky" or "place amidst the clouds" refers to the Imperial palace, and Fukei Bay washes the shore of Kii Province.

<sup>3</sup> Written "on the fifteenth night of the eighth month (lunar calendar) upon a screen while I was visiting an estate with a pond."

<sup>4</sup> Composed on Tanabata day, the seventh day of the seventh month. Tanabata, or the Weaving Damsel (Lyrá), was united to Kengyo, the Cowherd (Aquila), by her father, the Heavenly Ruler, for whom she wove cloth. After her marriage, however, Tanabata became lax in the performance of her duties, and was therefore compelled by her father to separate from her husband: she residing with her father on one shore of the Heavenly River (Milky Way), her husband on the other. They were permitted to meet only once a year, and even on this day, should it rain and the Heavenly River be swollen, the meeting had to be abandoned.

<sup>1</sup> "Sent to a woman whom I secretly adored."

<sup>2</sup> The old city refers to Nara, which is situated some miles from Mt. Yoshino.

<sup>3</sup> In olden days even along the highways the grasses grew so thick and tall as frequently to compel travellers to tie the blades together in order to clear the road.

<sup>4</sup> The God of Katsuragi was commissioned to build a rock bridge between the peaks of two mountains, Katsuragi and Yoshino. The work, however, progressed too slowly to please the chief god. It was discovered, on investigating, that, because the builder had an ugly face, he worked only during the night. This poem was given by the poetess to Tomomitsu, who was reluctant to part from her at daybreak.

<sup>5</sup> Old age has overtaken him while he is striving for glory. "Yo" in the original means "night" as well as "age."

<sup>6</sup> Composed during an outing with a prince on the "Day of the Rat." On the first of the days in a year assigned to the rat (one of the zodiacal signs), the nobles used to go to the fields and pluck young pines. The pine being an emblem of longevity, the poem indirectly wishes the prince a long life.

<sup>7</sup> Entitled "Maiden Love."

<sup>8</sup> This was sent by the poetess "To Taira no Kaneki, whose love is waning." By "sound" is here meant both the noise of the wind in the reeds and the hoped-for message or visit from the lover.

The design on the verso of the back cover, by Hiromori, reflects this poem, showing a moor overgrown with reeds which are being blown by the wind.